



10 Things You Should Know About Infant Mental Health

1) What is Infant Mental Health?

Infant Mental Health refers to the quality of social and emotional development of children in the first few years of life. The field of Infant Mental Health is a multidisciplinary approach to enhancing these aspects of development.

2) Why does it matter?

Convincing evidence suggests that serious problems like delinquency, school failure, interpersonal violence, and premature parenthood have their roots in early childhood relationship experiences. These are problems that cripple our current and future work forces and undermine economic growth by producing resource consumers rather than contributors.

3) What are the goals of Infant Mental Health?

To enhance social competence and emotional well-being in young children and their families, to prevent risk factors from having an adverse effect on development, and to reduce or eliminate suffering.

4) Can problems be identified in very young children?

Yes, young children who are at high risk for disorders likely to emerge later are well delineated, and many psychological disorders can be reliably identified even in the first few years of life.

5) Are there treatments that are effective in helping very young children?

Yes, studies have indicated that intensive treatments of young children and their parents are effective in enhancing development, preventing later problems, and ameliorating disturbances in early childhood.



6) Can problems be prevented?

Yes, there is evidence that prevention efforts can be quite successful and cost effective, if the investment made is substantial and long-term.

7) Is special training required to practice Infant Mental Health?

Yes, mental health professionals, even those trained as practitioners to work with children and families, usually require specialized training to work effectively with young children and their families.

8) What are some of the efforts Underway?

Project ABC is a federally funded project in Los Angeles designed to create change at the beginning of children's lives. Even as infants and toddlers, children need support to optimize their healthy social and emotional development, which for some children includes mental health services.

9) Can more be done?

You bet! The investment that we have made is minuscule in comparison to the need and the potential for improving the lives of young children.

10) How can I learn more?

Contact Project ABC at www.projectabc-la.org or call Childrens Hospital Los Angeles at 323-361-2350 or The Children's Institute, Inc. at 213-252-6570

